

## Downtown plan wins award for Bloomfield

BY HALLEY BONDY

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In December, Bloomfield adopted a plan to add green areas, walkways and a parking deck to the town's center in order to encourage business growth, solve traffic patterns and lure shoppers.

Last week, the plan, which has not even broken ground, was honored by the policy group New Jersey Future with a Smart Growth award for its inclusion of transit, businesses and residential components.

Some of the improvements, including the addition of walkways to the Six Points intersection on the corner of Glenwood Avenue, Bloomfield Avenue, Washington Avenue and Broad Street, are expected to be done within a year and a half. A construction timetable is still being hashed out, because the town is reviewing developers' submissions, said Bloomfield's director of community development Glenn Domenick.

Township officials hope the Bloomfield Center Redevelopment Plan, which was officially drawn up in December after years of controversy, will transform the area surrounding the Bloomfield Lackawanna Train Station into a shopping destination, according to Domenick.

New Jersey Future honored Bloomfield Wednesday along with six other towns, including an af-

fordable housing plan in Camden and a main street plan in South Orange.

The new plan comes after an earlier attempt to revitalize the area was blocked by the courts. In 2005, the town was pursuing a plan that included the construction of a large shopping center. The plan outraged many Bloomfield residents and was ultimately rejected by New Jersey courts, which ruled that the city could not use eminent domain to implement it. Domenick said the rejection brought the town "back to the drawing board."

In the duration, the area was bereft of incoming businesses and growth opportunities, said Stuart Koperweis, executive director of the Bloomfield Center Alliance, which represents dozens of the businesses in the area. Koperweis said the lack of parking and pedestrian walkways is also a deterrent for consumers.

"This does not look like a conducive place to go shopping," said Koperweis, who said he has been actively involved in the development. "But with this new plan, they are including input from retailers and people in the community. . . . I think that's why they won this award."

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